



INTEGRATION AND DIFFERENTIATION WITH CUSTOM BUSINESS SOLUTIONS

EXECUTIVE WHITE PAPER



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Introduction

As the graphic communications industry evolves with fewer and more sophisticated players, the requirements of print and marketing service providers are becoming more complex. Identified needs include:

- Increased digital print sales opportunities
- Improved database access and reporting
- Enhanced workflow automation
- Personalized business-to-customer interaction
- Full hardware and software connectivity
- Maximum uptime and availability
- Campaign management planning, execution, and measurement
- Ability to engage in new market opportunities and reach more customers

No off-the-shelf product can possibly anticipate or deliver all of the market's needs. This is where custom business services come in. Custom applications can help fulfill these requirements and mean the difference between being a profit challenger and a profit leader. Printers are facing unprecedented challenges that are unique to their individual businesses. Out-of-the-box solutions may address most of these issues, but it's clear that today's graphic arts businesses need more.

Defining Custom Business Services

Custom business services develop applications that simplify, automate, and integrate any number of business or production tasks. Print and marketing service providers of all sizes can benefit because these applications can help them run more efficiently and cater to the requirements of a particular vertical market, or set of customers.

For example, some printers have created a niche in unique photo books for the high-end real estate market by customizing their web-to-print experience; others have eased creative, production and fulfillment bottlenecks for large retailers with enhancements to workflow connectivity. In other instances, the issue could be a lack of labor or skills to maximize existing software, for which a simple automation function could add value. These applications can potentially enhance margin opportunities for the printer.

Custom business solutions can also speed business transformation from print service provider to marketing service partner. It often takes companies several years to see a return on investment when making this transition.

SERVICES FOR THE GRAPHIC COMMUNICATIONS INDUSTRY

- Production Line
 - Optimized use of tools
 - Advanced deployment of tools
 - Best practices
- Manufacturing Site
 - Integrated multi-vendor systems
 - Business continuity
 - End-to-end process optimization
 - Hybrid workflows
- Enterprise Deployment
 - Wide area workflow
 - Maximum availability
- Portals
- E-Commerce
- 1:1 Marketing

Custom business services have the opportunity to play a key role in accelerating that time by filling specific gaps for specific market needs.

What it can do for your business

Integration Value

A totally integrated solution delivers immense value in terms of cost savings. For example, as printers add more services, such as campaign and database management, direct marketing, personal URLs, and web to print solutions, a central collection point for data is required. In today's typical operation, there are still a number of touch points or manual handoffs from one system to another. A custom application can create a more efficient, streamlined workflow with the highest degree of added services for print buyers.

Differentiation Value

Out-of-the-box products are easy for any business to buy. This means that competitors can buy the same product, introduce the same services, and appear to have a comparable solution. Custom applications help printers compete on more than just price and quality—they help build better differentiation and provide more value with better customer-facing tools, superior reporting, and increased automation. A custom solution means that the competition will not be able to easily mirror the service.

Long-Term Value

Over the past few years, many print providers have added products to fulfill the immediate needs of their customers. However, many of these have been ad hoc solutions, and as these contracts near completion, many will be looking to uproot those systems for various reasons including dissatisfaction with the hosting model, support, product roadmap delays, and lack of suitability to the company's long-term direction. Because custom business services start with an examination of a printer's overall business needs, it can more flexibly fulfill both short and longer-term value.



ARE CUSTOM BUSINESS SERVICES RIGHT FOR YOU?

Here are the key questions you should ask:

Does your business have a specific problem or opportunity that you are finding difficult to address with off-the-shelf technology?

Can you quantify the value of solving the issue?

If the answers are yes, custom business services are an option worth exploring.

Choosing a partner

It is important to choose a custom business partner who will take the time to understand your entire business operation and what you want the application to achieve. In addition, it is important to check out the company and its portfolio to determine the best fit in terms of current needs and the ability to scale for growth. Some things to consider:

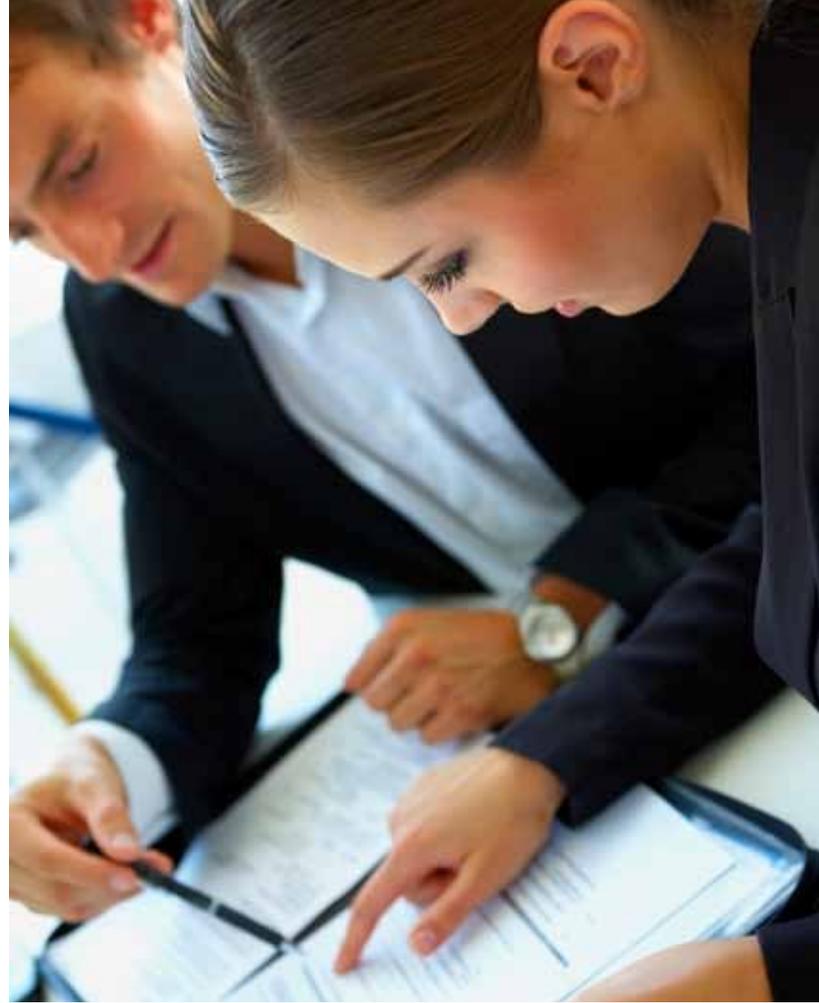
- Do they have a deep understanding of today's business issues and opportunities?
- Do they have the resources and expertise you need to succeed?
- Does their portfolio reflect innovation, integration and other qualities you're looking for in a solution?
- Are they able to work with the systems you already have installed?
- Do they offer all the services you need including full design and deployment, installation, documentation, training and testing?

Many vendors will develop software exactly as requested without a full project analysis. Good custom software development requires a complete project analysis, based on specific client needs.

According to the National Association for Printing Leadership, if you look to correct a situation or add value to within your organization, it should be viewed in the context of the total goal and not just one silo within your organization*.

Summary

Custom business services offer more than shrink-wrapped offerings: they can provide more automation, integration, differentiation, and growth opportunities with applications tailored for specific business needs. An out-of-the-box product may provide the majority of the solution, but in today's market, that often isn't enough. Custom business services can provide print and communication providers the missing pieces that they need along their transformation path.



*NAPL State of the Industry Report, Eighth Edition, September 2009

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